

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed Conversion of Upper Floors and
Extension to Rear of Building to
Create 14No. Apartments at

4 – 6, REGENT STREET
WREXHAM
LL11 1SA

For

HARDING COMMERCIAL



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1.0 INTRODUCTION.

1.1

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for full planning permission for the conversion of and an extension to the unused first and second floors to 8No. one bedroomed apartments together with an extension to the rear of the building to provide a further 6No. one bedroomed apartments including means of pedestrian access. Minor changes are proposed to the layout of the ground floor accommodation in order to provide dedicated rear external accesses to the proposed apartments and the retail unit is to be retained and refitted prior to being re-let following completion of the proposed works.

1.2

This statement meets the statutory requirements of Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(Wales) Order (“the DMPWO”) 2012, as amended by Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016.

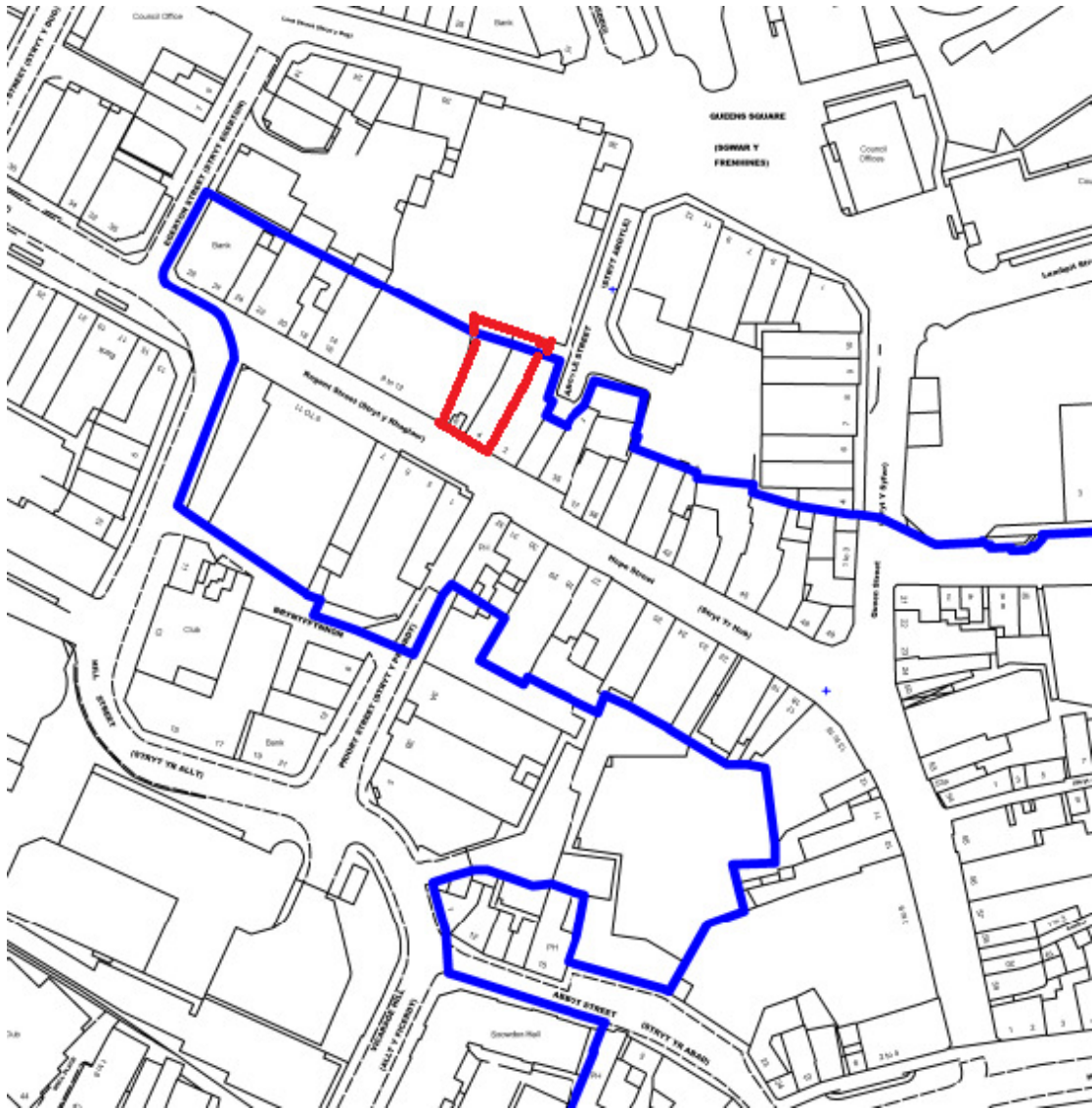
1.3

This Design and Access Statement provides an analysis of the application site and building and sets out the principles that have guided and informed the design.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1

The application site comprises a traditional 3 storey building of significant character which provides around 360 square metres of Retail A1 floor space at ground floor level with a street level frontage on to Regent Street at a point inside the Town Centre Conservation Area. Access via an internal staircase is provided to the first and second floors which show some evidence of previously having been used as storage and administration space in conjunction with the ground floor retail use.



Extract from the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Map – application site indicated with a red line boundary.

2.2

The application is located within the Town Centre settlement boundary, in a Shopping Area and with direct frontage on to a Principal Shopping Street and within the Town Conservation Area as defined by the Adopted Unitary Development Plan.

2.3

The application site has the benefit of service access to the rear from Argyle Street in order to receive deliveries to the retail unit and for emergency egress from the ground floor retail area and the proposed residential apartments.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL.

3.1

The proposal is to make minor alterations to the ground floor retail space and utilize the existing rear staircase to serve the first, second and third floor extension to the rear of the building. The existing concrete internal staircase which currently serves the existing first and second floor accommodation will be retained to serve the proposed apartments within the existing building and in the proposed extension to the Regent Street elevation. 8No. apartments are to be created by the conversion of the existing first and second floor spaces and by extending to the building line at first and second floor level to the line of the ground floor shopfront. A further 6No. apartments are to be provided within the proposed extension to the rear of the building.

3.2

The existing retail space at ground floor level is to be refurbished and refitted as part of the development and is to be re-let on completion in order to contribute positively to the regeneration of the Town Centre.

3.3

The retention of the existing façade at first and second floor level has been carefully considered but the existing structure and fabric of this part of the building's façade is in poor condition. The Structural Report provided by JP Structural Design Ltd concludes that the façade of the building at first and second floor level has lost key with the central structure and is subject to ongoing structural movement. Additionally, the report concludes that the central section of the structure which is formed predominantly of large chimney breasting and stacks above, has settled on the steelwork supports below, suggesting that the steel structure at structural first floor level is overloaded and has detached from the building's facade. The concrete and sandstone lintels, sills, columns and bands of the front elevation at first and second floor levels are particularly friable and in extremely poor condition and beyond the point of economical repair.

3.4

The proposals therefore, provide an opportunity to realign the first and second floors to the building line at ground floor level and introduce similar but simpler detailing to the front elevation in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the building and assimilate it more pleasingly in to the overall street scene. At the same time, the removal of internal chimney breasting and the construction of lateral internal walls will reduce the loading on the existing structural steelwork and provide the opportunity to tie the existing façade in to the main body of the building and retain it as an internal detail.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT.

4.1

The site has no recent planning history but is located inside the Town Centre settlement boundary as defined in the adopted UDP. Strategic Adopted Local Planning Policies PS1, PS2 and PS4 of the UDP are relevant to the proposals as are Policies EC7, S1, S3 and GDP1. Local Planning Guidance Note LPGN19 sets out an assessment of the Town's Character Areas and sets out a Strategy for Change.

4.2

Policy PS1 states that new development for housing etc will be directed to "*within defined settlement limits*".

4.3

Policy PS2 states that "*Development must not materially detrimentally affect... townscape character... or the quality of the natural environment*". The proposals include the replacement of the existing façade of the building in a sensitive way together with the improvement of the existing building which will preserve and enhance townscape character. In addition the refurbishment of the ground floor retail space will lead to the re-letting of the space for the

established A1 Retail use thereby making a significant contribution to the viability and vitality of the Town Centre.

4.4

Policy PS4 states that “*Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and... help to reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.*” The proposed development of residential apartments within the upper floors of the application site will have the joint benefits of utilising underused spaces within this existing building, will provide much needed residential accommodation in a highly sustainable location within the Town Centre where car ownership will be rendered unnecessary and reliance upon travel on foot and by public transport will be encouraged.

4.5

Policy EC7 is relevant to the consideration of the application because of the site’s location within the Town Centre Conservation Area. This policy states that “*Within....conservation areas, the priority will be to preserve and / or enhance those buildings, structures.....which contribute to the unique character of the area. New buildings and alterations or additions to the existing buildings in conservation areas....must reflect the design and character of the area as a whole....*” The proposals include the erection of a new front elevation or façade at first and second floor levels which will be constructed on the line of the long established ground floor footprint. This type of frontage is typical along the length of Regent Street and Hope Street throughout the Conservation Area and is an appropriate way to tackle the identified issues with the structural integrity of the existing façade at first and second floor which has for many years been supported off a structural steelwork frame at ground floor. The only elements of the original ground floor structure of the building that remain are parts of the party walls / former gable walls, the original façade at ground floor level having been removed many years ago. It is contended that with the careful selection of external materials and the manufacture and installation of appropriately designed and window

openings, the approach promoted as part of this application for planning permission is appropriate and will preserve and enhance this particular building in the long term in accordance with adopted planning policy and supplementary planning guidance.

4.6

Adopted Policy S1 states that “*Non-retail proposals on ground floor frontages in the principal shopping streets.... will not be permitted if they have a detrimental effect upon the character, vitality or viability of the area.*” The proposals involve the retention of the existing retail use at ground floor level in compliance with this particular Policy. Furthermore the proposed residential development at first and second floor levels will stimulate the re-letting of the ground floor retail space which together with the accompanying renovation of the external elements of the building together will have the cumulative effect of preserving and enhancing the character, viability and vitality of the area.

4.7

Policy S3 in the Adopted UDP states that “*In order to sustain and enhance it's vitality and viability, Wrexham Town Centre will be the preferred location for non-shopping uses...*” Such uses could include residential apartments such as those proposed where “*they are readily accessible to public transport facilities... are of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the Town Centre and would help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole.*” As has been demonstrated above, the re-use of the redundant first and second floor spaces together with an appropriate extension to the rear will bring individuals in to the Town Centre in a highly sustainable location, increasing natural surveillance in the evening and night time hours, stimulating the re-use of the retail space at ground floor level and preserving and enhancing the external appearance of this traditional building which plays an important role in the street scene. All of the above elements of the proposals taken together, contribute positively to enhancing the character, vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.

4.8

The proposed development can further be shown to be in compliance with the aims and objectives of UDP Policy GDP1 which requires that “*All new development should:-*

- a) Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*
- b) Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.*
- c) Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.*
- d) Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.*
- e) Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.*
- f) Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.*
- g) Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.*
- h) Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.*
- i) Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.*

j) Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.

k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area

4.9

The proposed development will occupy an existing building and will include the provision of a new façade which will be detailed to match the existing, defective elements of the existing front elevation in order to accord with the character of the site and wider street scene and to contribute positively to the appearance of the locality in compliance with part a) of this policy.

4.10

The development will enhance personal and community safety by increasing the use of the rear service area for pedestrian access on a more regular basis thereby discouraging anti-social behaviour in this private area and can served safely on foot and by vehicles in the interests of pedestrian and highway safety and is located in the Town Centre near to the Bus Station. The site can therefore be shown to be highly sustainably located.

4.11

The change of use can be undertaken without any negative impact upon the amenity of adjacent neighbours and other nearby residents. Statutory services are all available adjacent to the site and can be provided without costs to the public purse.

4.12

The development of the site will not result in the loss of habitat or ecologically valuable land and the site is not within an area prone to flooding. The development represents sustainable development in accordance with the aims and objectives of this particular planning policy.

4.13

Local Planning Guidance Note No. 19 indicates that the site is located within the Historic Core of Wrexham where the Strategy for Change includes :-

- Conservation
- Restoration
- Encouragement of Diversity

The proposals include the replacement of the existing front elevation at first and second floor levels due to the condition of the existing elements of this elevation and in a manner which is more in keeping with the established street scene along the length of Regent Street. The change of use of the first and second floors represents a diversification of the existing use which will bring the building back in to use. All aspects of the proposal can therefore be clearly shown to be in compliance with Adopted Local Planning Guidance.

4.14

In terms of planning policy, it has been shown that the development of the application site by the change of use of the first and second floor levels is in compliance with adopted local planning and supplementary planning guidance.

5.0 DESIGN

5.1

Good design is an all embracing concept. The statement considers the essence of good design in response to the following factors :-

- Use
- Amount
- Layout

- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance

The above objectives are key to good design, to the understanding of and response to context and should form the basis of any scheme and design statement.

5.2 **Use and Amount.**

The proposed development which constitutes the change of use of redundant and unnecessary space at first and second floor levels, will utilize space which is not required to support the retail use at ground floor level. The change of use and the resultant rental income will have the benefit of subsidising the rent required from the ground floor retail space in order to make the use of the whole building viable, thereby stimulating the re-use of the retail space and creating employment, further enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. It is proposed that all apartments should be one bed roomed in order to attract single professional persons and couples. It can be shown that with the extension to the front of the building at first and second floor levels, 8 No. apartments can be provided within the original part of the building. Furthermore, it is possible to provide an extension to the rear of the building to correspond with the height of the adjacent building at 8 to 12, Regent Street in order to create an additional 6 No. one bed roomed apartments. This extension and the resultant units will contribute significantly to the viability of the overall scheme having regard to the investment in the existing building to ensure its long term survival.

5.3 **Layout.**

The proposed site layout includes the building itself and the rear service / access area which will provide access for delivery vehicles to serve the retail unit and provide resident's access to the proposed apartments. It is anticipated that tenants will not require the use of a motor car but will rather

take advantage of this highly sustainable Town Centre location and availability of public transport in order to avoid car ownership.

5.4 Scale.

The proposed development is to occupy the existing first and second floor levels together with access at ground floor level. Extension are proposed to both the front and rear of the building. To the front of the building, the proposed extension will replace the existing defective front elevation to Regent Street whilst at the same time removing the existing flat balcony immediately above the ground floor retail frontage and creating a façade and building line which is more in keeping with the overall street scene. To the rear, an extension is proposed that will take advantage of the significant height difference between the application site and the adjoining building.

5.5 Landscaping.

Soft landscaping is not relevant to this application for planning permission.

5.6 Appearance.

As outlined above, the principal external elevation of the building which has a direct impact upon the street scene will be replaced with a modern construction which will include traditional detailing in order to replicate the existing design detailing. As such the outward appearance of the building will be enhanced and this will in turn contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Town Centre in this location.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In summary, the proposed development identified as part of this application for planning permission has striven to achieve the following aims and objectives :-

- Provide much needed residential accommodation within redundant spaces above a ground floor retail unit
- Maintain the character and enhance the form of the existing built development in the area generally in order to successfully assimilate the proposed development in to the surroundings
- Provide a development which achieves the aims and objectives of adopted UDP policies for this type of residential development

In conclusion, this Design and Access Statement has demonstrated that the proposals are in accordance with adopted local planning policy and supplementary planning guidance for the conversion of non-residential space to residential use in the Town Centre.

In consideration of the above and the other information provided as part of the application, officers are respectfully requested to view these proposals favourably and resolve to grant planning permission.

D.S. Jones &Co. September 2020.

For and on behalf of Harding Commercial.

